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SUBJECT: CZECH VIEWS ON NORTH KOREA

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Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mike Dodman for reasons 1.4
b+d

11. (C) Summary: The Czechs support a tough stance on North Korea following the nuclear test. The Foreign Minister this week published a strongly worded op-ed stating that the DPRK has confirmed its position within the axis of evil. The MFA confirms that all elements of UNSCR 1718 will be adopted and enforced by the Czechs, working together with other EU partners when possible. The Czechs canceled a planned visit to Prague by the North Korean Deputy Foreign Minister and are reviewing all existing humanitarian assistance programs. At present, the GOCR is not contemplating any changes in the controversial employment contracts with North Korea. End summary.

12. (U) The Czech position on North Korea following the nuclear test was summarized in an editorial published by Foreign Minister Vondra on October 16. Vondra said the DPRK had solidified its position as a member of the "axis of evil" with the test, and also asserted that there is a risk that the regime would cooperate with terrorists, specifically mentioning Al-Qaeda. He said the nuclear test, together with the July 4 missile tests, are proof that Europe needs the safety umbrella that would be provided by the U.S. missile defense system (currently being discussed for placement in the Czech Republic and/or Poland).

13. (C) In a meeting October 17, Ivana Grollova, Deputy Director of the MFA Asia Department, discussed some of the steps the GOCR had taken in response to the test. Grollova said the Czechs had considered withdrawing their Ambassador in Pyongyang, but accepted the consensus reached within the EU that it made more sense for EU missions to keep their chiefs in place in Pyongyang to act as mediators and also out of fear that they might not have been permitted to return to the country if recalled. Grollova said the MFA immediately canceled an upcoming visit to Prague by the DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister. Czech humanitarian aid to North Korea has been put on hold to be evaluated, but Grollova expected that it would continue. This includes food aid and water pumps that would assist with future flooding. In addition, the Czech embassy in Pyongyang has scaled back its planned national day reception (October 28), and will only hold a small event for other diplomats. Grollova said that the tests have not prompted the MFA to consider eliminating the program that has approximately 400 North Koreans working in the Czech Republic, but explained that the controversial program is already under intense review within the government and that no new work permits or visas are currently being issued (details septel).

14. (C) In a meeting on October 20, Jan Kara, Director of the MFA UN Department, confirmed that the Czechs would be fully complying with all elements of UNSCR 1718. Kara noted that

the Czechs will work within the EU where possible, and expected that a planned October 23 meeting of the EU sanctions committee would focus on UNSCR 1718. Kara said the Czechs are still reviewing what steps need to be taken to implement the requirements of 1718, but do not expect any legislation will be required. Kara noted that they are still waiting for additional details from the UN, for example what constitutes a luxury item. Kara said the GOCR is not currently planning any bilateral sanctions.

15. (C) Both the UN and Asian Departments expressed interest in closer cooperation with the USG on North Korea, noting the presence of the Czech Embassy in Pyongyang and the small niche the Czechs have established with the North Koreans on humanitarian programs.

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